

Leicestershire TTA: Dave clinches Knighton Park title in thriller

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Dave Gannon accepts the Knighton Park Open Singles trophy from club secretary Gordon Sander

Without doubt the highlight of Finals Night at the Knighton Park club was an absolutely superb finale in the **Open Singles** which not only went all the way to the wire but gave everyone a first-class glimpse of how a merest change of strategy can move the advantage from one player to the other, and back again, in an intriguing match.

Earlier, **Dave Gannon** had beaten Les Baker, albeit dropping a game as Les fought all the way, the final score being 11-8, 11-4, 8-11, 11-4.

The other semi found **Karen Smith** overcoming Steve Bessant who had done well to come through the qualifying stages. Karen looked in tip top form and came through 11-4, 11-4, 11-2.

On to the final, with Karen taking the first two games and looking to beat Dave for, I believe, the first time, and he looked in trouble with Karen angling her blocked returns really well and with a great deal of pace. Dave changed his game slightly, encouraging Karen to take the initiative which she was quite willing to do, coming so, so, close in the third before going down 11-9 and then Dave took the fourth 11-6. All to play for.

The decider was a humdinger. Poised at 3-3, 7-7, 9-9 and then deuce with both having match point before Dave sneaked home 14-12. If ever there was a case for an honourable draw, this was it.

Dave Gannon beat Karen Smith 3-2 (8-11, 6-11, 11-9, 11-6, 14-12).

Boys' Singles

Rayan Kotecha settled quicker than his Division One opponent, taking the first game and looking in good form. Aman Rashid upped his game with a more aggressive approach and won the next three games, albeit having to bring out some top play to beat a game Rayan.

Aman Rashid beat Rayan Kotech 3-1 (7-11, 11-5, 11-7, 11-8).

Handicap Doubles

Kinar Sheth and Steve Bessant, receiving 2 per game, combined well and were always in control against Simon Aldis and John Bowness, who had come through qualifying without dropping a game. They never looked like winning one this time against very solid opponents.

Kinar Sheth & Steve Bessant (+2) beat Simon Aldis & John Bowness 21-15, 21-15.

Handicap Singles

Adam Green, receiving 12, was in a promoted team from Division Five this season but his opponent, Aman Rashid, used all of his vast experience at such a young age in relentless play, getting home in two games, but Adam will have learned much in his useful run to the final.

Aman Rashid beat Adam Green (+12) 21-15, 21-18.

Veterans' Singles

Karen Smith, in the first of her two finals, won the first very easily against Les Baker but Les was getting more into things as the match progressed, only just losing the second before having a wonderful opportunity in the third game to grab the initiative before Karen won by a nailbiting 12-10.

Karen Smith beat Les Baker 11-3, 11-8, 12-10.

Smith also beat Baker in the final of the Hard Bat 21-17, 21-16.

The other events were all round-robin format with Adnan Ebrahim taking the Cadet title, beating along the way last season's winner, Rayan Kotecha. Kinar Sheth won the Junior Girls' singles which included an excellent victory over Shreya Mehta. Karen Smith won the Ladies singles as she has done for many years.

Attached: Dave Gannon accepts the Knighton Park Open Singles trophy from club secretary, Gordon Sander.

John Bowness (publicity officer)

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